

Basic Officer Leadership Course: An Essential Element to Transforming the Officer Education System

By Major James Wilson

At a time of enormous change in the Army, when transformation is occurring across the spectrum, the Officer Education System (OES) is no exception. The transformation of basic officer training has been underway for the past few years and is intended to provide a foundation of training and experience for all Army officers before they attend their proponent branch schools. The new basic-level OES features three phases of the Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC).

Basic Officer Leadership Course I

BOLC I consists of training that officers get at their commissioning source, such as the Reserve Officer Training Corps; the US Military Academy; or active duty, US Army Reserve, or National Guard officer candidate schools.

Basic Officer Leadership Course II

BOLC II is a six-week course that endeavors to give Army officers in all branches a foundation of basic and common core training and experience. The mission of BOLC II is to develop competent and confident small unit combat leaders. Lieutenants will learn individual responsibility, self-discipline, and self-respect and begin to live the Army's seven core values. At BOLC II, they will—

- Learn the customs, heritage, and traditions of the service.
- Develop the knowledge and skills necessary to survive on today's battlefield.
- Develop a physical fitness ethic.

The Army is finalizing its program of instruction for BOLC II. The final multisite implementation began in January at Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma. BOLC II for all officers will begin in the first week of June 2006.

The US Army Military Police School (USAMPS) is the only Maneuver Support Center (MANSCEN) proponent school participating in the final multisite BOLC II initial implementation. USAMPS is scheduled to receive approximately 25 lieutenants into BOLC III in March 2006. BOLC III will completely replace the Military Police Officer Basic Course (MPOBC) in late July. The plan is that officers arriving from BOLC II will have a common foundation in military training upon which to build. The job of USAMPS will be to add the military police-specific skills the officers will need to be successful platoon leaders.

Basic Officer Leadership Course III

BOLC III is the branch-specific phase of training for each newly commissioned lieutenant and will be conducted within a week of completing BOLC II. Some of the most significant changes between MPOBC and BOLC III will be the amount of time the officer will spend at USAMPS. MPOBC lasts 17 weeks while BOLC III will last only 10 weeks. USAMPS has an approved program of instruction for military police BOLC III. The obvious changes eliminate or reduce instruction from MPOBC that will be conducted in BOLC II, primarily common core tasks. The new focus at USAMPS for BOLC III will be on military police-specific training.

A word picture used in a briefing early in the course sums up the expectations of military police lieutenants who graduate from BOLC III. "Graduates . . . possess the technical and tactical skills, physical fitness and leadership qualities required to successfully lead platoons. They are familiar with the five functions of the Military Police Corps, and are trained on the most critical

tasks required of a platoon leader. These officers demonstrate a thorough understanding of, and willingness to live by, the Army values and a firm grasp of the foundation of a competent and confident leader.”